

# Populism and Progressive Era

Classroom packet



Ms. Vanderpool

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Per. \_\_\_\_\_

## Trends in America at the Turn of the Century

Define each of the following and then identify the positive & negative aspects of each.

	POSITIVE		NEGATIVE
URBANIZATION		URBANIZATION	
INDUSTRIALIZATION		INDUSTRIALIZATION	
IMMIGRATION		IMMIGRATION	
NATIONALIZATION		NATIONALIZATION	
SEGREGATION		SEGREGATION	
UNIONIZATION		UNIONIZATION	
MECHANIZATION		MECHANIZATION	
CONSOLIDATION		CONSOLIDATION	
SPECIALIZATION		SPECIALIZATION	
DEHUMANIZATION		DEHUMANIZATION	

## **The Farmers' Dilemma: To Produce or Not to Produce**

### **Document A**

#### **Average Market Prices of Three Crops, 1870-1897**

Years	Wheat (per bushel)	Corn (per bushel)	Cotton (per pound)
1870-1873	106.7	43.1	15.1
1874-1877	94.4	40.9	11.1
1878-1881	100.6	43.1	9.5
1882-1885	80.2	39.8	9.1
1886-1889	74.8	35.9	8.3
1890-1893	70.9	41.7	7.8
1894-1897	63.3	29.7	5.8

From the *Populist Revolt* by John D. Hicks, orig. 1931, renewed 1959. Reprinted with permission of University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN

1. What conditions could account for the variation in market prices from 1870-1897?  
(Name at least 3)

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

2. What position would farmers' take towards laissez-faire as a result of the above situation?

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Document B**

*We were told two years ago to go to work and raise a big crop, that was all we needed. We went to work and plowed and planted; the rains fell, the sun shone, nature smiled, and we raised the big crop that they told us to; and what came of it? Eight cent corn, ten cent oats, two cent beef and no price at all for butter and eggs- that's what came of it,. Then the politicians said that we suffered from over-production.*

John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt*

1. What quandary (predicament) did the farmers find themselves in?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What possible reaction could they make as a result of this situation?

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Document C**

*It is not unfair to say that normally the railroads – sometimes a single (rail)road – dominated the political situation in every western state., In Kansas the Sante Fe was all-powerful; in Nebraska the Burlington and the Union Pacific shared the control of the state; everywhere the political power of one or more of the roads was a recognized fact. Railway influence was exerted in practically every important nominating convention to insure that no one hostile to the railways should be named for office. Railway lobbyists were on hand whenever a legislature met to see that measures unfavorable to the roads were quietly eliminated. Railway taxation, a particularly tender question, was always watched with the greatest solicitude (concern) and, from the standpoint of the prevention of high taxes, usually with the greatest of success. How much bribery and corruption and intrigue the railroads used to secure the ends they desired will never be known. For a long time, however, by fair means or foul, their wishes in most localities were closely akin to law. Beyond a doubt whole legislatures were sometimes bought and sold.*

John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt*

1. What kind of control did the railroads exert in the western states?

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2. What is a lobbyist?

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3. How did railroad lobbyists ensure that the power of the railroads would be secured?

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4, John D. Hicks asserts that “legislatures were sometimes bought and sold.” What impact would this have on the democratic process? On the power of the railroads?

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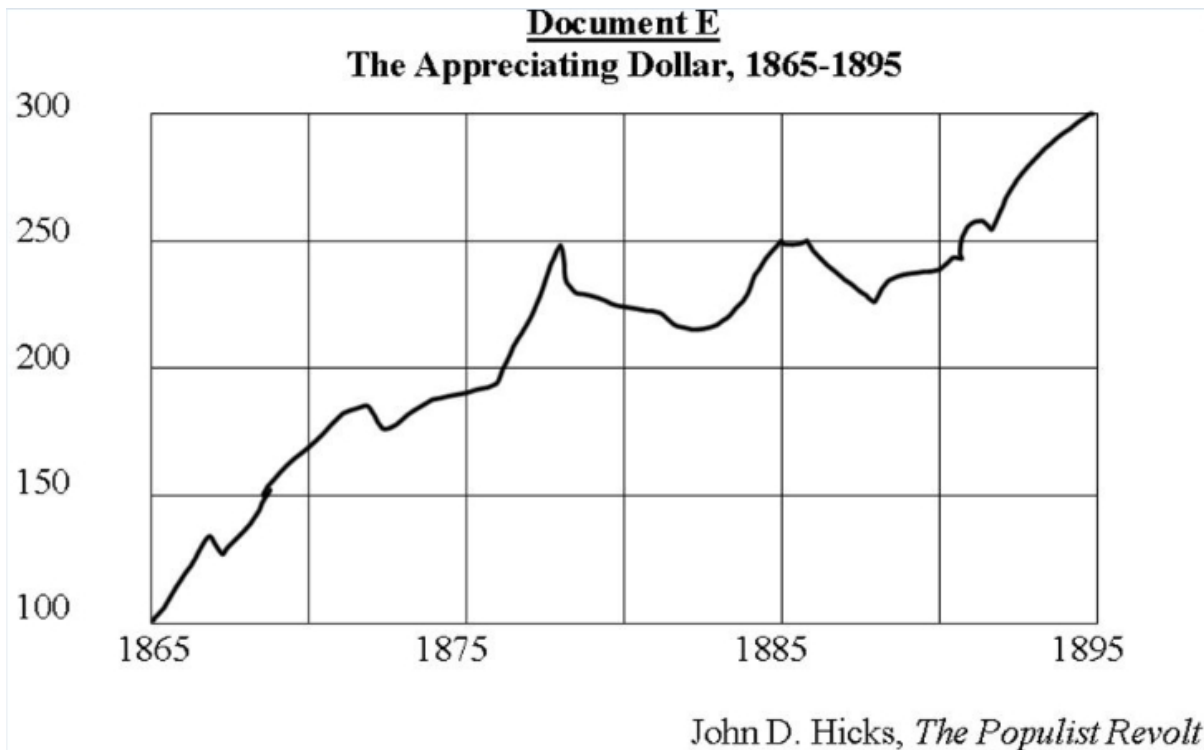
### **Document D**

*If the farmer had little part in fixing the price at which his produce sold, he had no part at all in fixing the price of the commodities (anything bought and sold) for which his earnings were spent. Neither did competition among manufacturers and dealers do much in the way of price-fixing, for the age of “big business” of trusts, combines, pools nor monopolies, had come. These trusts, as the farmers saw it, joined with the railroads, and if necessary, with the politicians, “to hold the people’s hands and pick their pockets.” They “bought raw material at their own price, sold the finished product at any figure they wished to ask, and rewarded labor as they saw fit.” Through their machinations (scheming) “the farmer and the workingman generally” were “overtaxed right and left.”*

John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt*

1. What effect did trusts and monopolies have on farmers?

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1. *Appreciation* means a raise in value or price. If the dollar is *appreciating*, what would that mean to farmers when they are trying to pay back their loans?

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**Document F**

*As one hard season succeeded another, the empty-handed farmer found his back debts and unpaid interest becoming an intolerable burden. In the West after the crisis of 1887, interest rates already high, rose still higher. Farmers who needed money to renew their loans, to meet partial payments on their land, or to tide them over to another season were told, truly enough, that money was very scarce. The flow of eastern capital to the West had virtually ceased. The various mortgage companies that had been doing such a thriving business a few months before had now either gone bankrupt or had made drastic retrenchments (economizing). Rates of seven or eight percent on real estate were now regarded as extremely low; and on chattels (livestock, farm equipment) ten or twelve percent was considered very liberal, from eighteen to twenty-four percent was not uncommon, and forty percent or above was not unknown. Naturally the number of real estate mortgages placed dropped off precipitately.*

1. What effect would these high interest rates, coupled with low market prices of farm crops (as seen in Document A) and the appreciating dollar have on the American farmer?

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2. What might the farmer begin to demand?

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### **Document G**

*Western farmers blamed many of their troubles upon the railroads, by means of which all western crops must be sent to market. There was no choice but to use these (rail)roads, and as the frontier advanced farther and farther into the West, the length of the haul to market increased correspondingly. Sometimes western wheat or corn was carried a thousand perhaps even two thousand, miles before it could reach a suitable place for export or consumption. For these long hauls, the railroads naturally exacted high rates, admittedly charging "all the traffic would bear." The farmers of Kansas and Nebraska and Iowa complained that it cost a bushel of corn to send another bushel of corn to market and it was commonly believed that the net profit of the carrier was greater than the net profit of the grower. The farmers of Minnesota and Dakota were accustomed to pay half the value of their wheat to get it as far towards its final destination as Chicago. Small wonder that the farmer held the railroads at least partly responsible for his distress! He believed that if he could only get his fair share of the price for which his produce eventually sold he would be prosperous enough.*

John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt*

1. Why did farmers blame the railroads for their economic distress?
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### **Document H**

*The railroads controlled the elevators and warehouses, fixed the prices of storage, and arbitrarily graded the farmers' grain to suit themselves. Even when a railroad was honestly administered, the situation was no great help to the farmer, for usually the road had to make up for past financial abuses or for rate wars in other parts of the system, and this reimbursement had to come from freight revenues. Though freight rates were declining during the generation after the Civil War, they still were a third higher in the South and a half higher in the West than in the East.*

*Since the farmer had to absorb the middleman's percentage and the freight rates to the collecting point (Chicago for most important products), there were times when so little was left that it scarcely paid to ship. At a time when corn was selling at a dollar in New York, the farmers in Kansas were finding it cheaper to burn their corn for fuel than to sell it and buy coal.*

Leland D. Baldwin, *The Stream of American History, Vol. II*  
(New York: American Book Company, 1952), p. 199

1. The railroads controlled the grain elevators. What effect did this have on the farmer?
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2. What could farmers do to try to change this situation to their benefit?
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<http://www.bluemontva.org/media/pics/history/max/305%20-%20Fairfax%20Cty%20-%20Grain%20elevator%20W%20and%20OD%20-%20Herndon165%20-%20572.jpg>

Notice the proximity (closeness) of grain elevator to railroad tracks.

### **In Conclusion**

1. What role did each of the following play in creating economic hardships for farmers?

railroads:

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middlemen (define):

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bankers:

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trusts:

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government officials:

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2. To what extent to the documents suggest that farmers were responsible for their own problems?

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3. Why would there have been strong forces in opposition to any government attempt to intervene on behalf of the farmers?

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4. What connection existed between the high cost of machinery and specialization in agriculture?

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## **The Grange Movement**

Many farmers began to organize into groups to deal with their problems. In 1867, the \_\_\_\_\_ was established. The Grange (\_\_\_\_\_) was a national association of farmer's clubs. At first, it was primarily a social group focusing on social activities. As the problems of the farmers grew, the Grangers became a group whose goal was to \_\_\_\_\_ to improve farmer's \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.

Most farmers saw the \_\_\_\_\_ as the main cause of their difficulties, since the railroads charged them \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ their crops to market. In several Midwestern states, Grangers elected candidates who enacted Granger Laws (\_\_\_\_\_) which controlled the rates that the railroads could charge farmers. Eventually, the Supreme Court declared many of the granger laws unconstitutional because they interfered with \_\_\_\_\_. The Grangers then turned to Congress for help, and in 1887, Congress passed the \_\_\_\_\_. This act created a government agency to regulate the railroads and interstate commerce.

**The purpose of the granger Movement was to:**

## **The Populist Party (1891-1908): The People's Party**

Founded in 1891 at a convention in Cincinnati, Ohio, the party adopted a platform calling for \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ and the issuance of large amounts of paper currency - \_\_\_\_\_ measures that it hoped would ease the financial burdens of the nation's debt-ridden \_\_\_\_\_. Its other demands included

- (1) abolishing the \_\_\_\_\_ system,  
\_\_\_\_\_,  
(\_\_\_\_\_),
- (2) instituting a \_\_\_\_\_, a.k.a.:  
\_\_\_\_\_ (or  
\_\_\_\_\_),

- (3) electing \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_,  
and  
(4) allowing people to participate directly in government by means of  
\_\_\_\_\_.

In 1892, the Populist Party nominated a candidate for the presidency. Even though he lost, he did receive more than a million popular votes and 22 electoral ones, and several Populist candidates were elected to Congress. In 1896, the Populists were able to control the Democratic convention and secured the nomination of William Jennings Bryan as candidate for the presidency, a candidate who favored the Populist program. Even though Bryan was defeated, and the influence of the Populist Party declined, some of its ideas were later incorporated in the U.S. system of government.

**The importance of the Populist Party was:**

**Instructions:** Review the summary chart and refer to it as you complete the sentences that follow. You will then understand how Populism grew and its effect on political and economic conditions between 1890 and 1920.

<b>Farmers' Alliances Gave Way to National People's Party</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Northern, Southern, and Colored Farmers' alliances supported state laws to limit the foreclosing of mortgages and to restrict unfair railroad practices.</li><li>• May 1891: National Peoples' party was founded by farmers.</li><li>• Its leaders were Thomas Watson of Georgia and Mary Elizabeth Lease of Kansas.</li></ul>
<b>Financial Demands of the Populists</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inflate currency by printing paper money or coining silver.</li><li>• Pass a graduated federal income tax.</li><li>• Create a postal savings bank.</li><li>• Establish a federal loan program allowing farmers to store products in government warehouses and to borrow up to 80 percent of their products' value.</li></ul>
<b>Transportation Demands of the Populists</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have the government own and operate railroads.</li></ul>

### **Elections of 1892 and 1896**

- 1892: Five Populist senators, ten representatives, three governors, and fifteen hundred state legislators were elected.
- 1896: Election issue was which metal would become the basis of the United States monetary system. “Free silverites” favored using both gold and silver. “Goldbugs” favored the gold standard. Goldbugs wanted an economy with little inflation.
- Democrats (“free silverites”) nominated William Jennings Bryan.
- Republicans (“goldbugs”) nominated William McKinley who was elected.
- Populists nominated Thomas Watson

### **Populist Demands for Government Reform**

- Elect United States senators by popular vote instead of the state legislatures.
- Limit the President and the Vice-President to a single term.
- Use secret ballots to end vote fraud.
- Initiative: Allow people to introduce bills by petition.
- Recall: Allow voters to remove officials before their terms are completed.
- Referendum: Allow a popular vote on bills after they have been passed by a legislature.

1. The farmers’ alliances favored laws that would limit the \_\_\_\_\_ of mortgages.
2. The National People’s Party was founded by \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Populists believed that railroads should be owned and operated by the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. A referendum is \_\_\_\_\_.
5. In an effort to curb vote fraud, Populists favored \_\_\_\_\_.
6. In the election of 1892, \_\_\_\_\_ Populist senators were elected, as well as fifteen hundred \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The central issue of the election of 1896 was which metal would be the basis of the nation’s \_\_\_\_\_.
8. “Free silverites” favored the use of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
9. The \_\_\_\_\_ candidate won the election of 1896.

## The Omaha Platform

Directions: In this activity, you will examine the ideology of the Populist Party. The Populist Party Platform was written in 1892 at Omaha, Nebraska. What follows is a summary of the original platform.

*We meet (in Omaha) as our nation is on the verge of moral, political, and material ruin. The rich and the bankers control the money in the country for their own greed. Our present system has led to two classes- tramps and millionaires. We have seen for more than a quarter of a century the struggles of the two great political parties (the Democrats and Republicans) for power and plunder (theft). Meanwhile terrible wrongs have been inflicted on the suffering people. Both parties have allowed these dreadful wrongs to develop without any effort to prevent them. The two major parties are dominated by greed, corruption, and rich people.*

*We declare therefore:*

- I. Labor forces are hereby united to uplift mankind.
- II. Wealth belongs to him who created it (the workers, not the owners).
- III. The industrial worker and the farmer have the same interests and the same enemies.
- IV. The people should own the railroads through the government.
- V. The government alone should control the money supply, and not the bankers.
- VI. There should be free and unlimited coinage of silver in a ratio of 16 to 1 compared to gold.
- VII. There should be a graduated income tax. (As income goes up, the tax rate goes up. For example, if you make \$10,000 you might pay 5% or \$500; if you make \$20,000, you might pay 10%, or \$2,000.
- VIII. The government should own and operate the telephone and telegraph (the carriers of information) in the interests of the people.
- IX. The land, including the natural resources in the land, belongs to the people. It should not be controlled by speculators (people who buy something expecting to sell it at an unusually large profit), and aliens (foreigners who are not citizens) should not be able to own it. Land owned by aliens and railroads should be reclaimed by the government and held for actual settlers.
- X. The government should limit immigration into the United States.
- XI. There should be a shorter work week for laborers.
- XII. The secret ballot should be used in all elections.
- XIII. The people should be able to use the initiative (by which private citizens could propose laws) and referendum (by which citizens could express an opinion on an issue by voting on it).
- XIV. Senators should be elected directly by the people. (At this time, U.S. Senators were elected by state legislatures, not by citizens directly).
- XV. The president of the United States should be able to serve one four-year term only.

## Relevant Information

- A. *Free coinage of silver would have increased the supply of money. An increase in the supply of money would generally lead to inflation (higher prices than there would have been if the money supply did not increase), unless the supply of goods and services increased by at least as much.*
- B. *Farmers had tried several times to use the government to regulate (control) the railroads in the interest of the farmers.*
- C. *People who owe money (debtors) generally benefit from inflation. This is because the amount of money they have to repay remains fixed (let's say \$100 per year) while their incomes from selling goods or services generally rise with inflation (let's say from \$150 in the first year to \$160 in the second year).*
- D. *People who are owed money (creditors- often banks) generally dislike inflation. This is because they will be paid back a fixed amount of money that will buy fewer goods and services as prices increase..*
- E. *Most Populists were farmers.*
- F. *Many industrial unions opposed immigration into the United States.*

**I. Put an X next to the statements with which you think the Populists would have agreed, based on the Omaha Platform of 1892. Then write the reason you checked or did not check each statement, citing passages from the platform by number.**

Statement	Reason
1. Rich people deserve to keep the money they have.	
2. Immigration is bad for the country.	
3. Wealth should be more equally divided.	
4. Society can be improved through reform.	
5. Reform can be achieved through the Democratic and Republican parties.	
6. Freedom is more important than equality.	
7. The government is controlled by the rich- it must be reformed.	

**II. Put an X next to the statement you think are true, based on the Omaha Platform and the relevant information. Then write the reasons for your choices, citing passages from the platform by number and items of relevant information by letter.**

Statement	Reasons
8. Farmers felt railroads were hurting them.	
9. Many farmers were debtors (they owed money on loans)	
10. The Populists were trying to gain the support of industrial workers.	
11. Bankers supported the ideas of free coinage of silver.	

	12. Populists were conservative- that is, they wanted to go back to earlier days. They were not pushing for innovation and change.	
	13. Populists were radical- they were suggesting radical change in our nation	

**POPULISM:** Farmers decided to more formally organize their political views and in doing so, founded the Populist Party. This third political party was largely unsuccessful, but introduced ideas that were later adopted by the Republican and democratic parties during the Progressive Era.

### **PLANKS IN THE POPULLIST PARTY PLATFORM**

Direct Election of U.S. Senators	Party bosses controlled state legislatures that elected representatives to the U.S. Senate. To limit this control, the Populists proposed allowing citizens to directly elect U.S. Senators.
Secret Ballot	Privacy at the ballot box would ensure that citizens can cast votes without party bosses knowing how they voted.
Initiative	Would allow voters to petition state legislature in order to consider a bill desired by citizens.
Referendum	Would allow voters to decide if a bill or proposed amendment should be passed.
Recall	Would allow voters to petition to have an elected representative removed from office.
Direct Primary	Designed to ensure that voters select candidates to run for office, rather than party bosses.

The demise of the Populist Party after the election of 1896 symbolized how the United States had changed from an agrarian economy to an industrial one. The emerging Middle Class had concerns that differed from those of the farmers.

## The Role of 3<sup>rd</sup> Parties in American Government

Name	Election Year	Presidential Candidate	Party Platform
	2000		Government paid health care, same sex marriage, affirmative action, limits on campaign financing environmental friendly public policies, eliminating NAFTA.
	1996		Balancing the budget, reforming Medicare and Social Security, eliminating the Electoral College, limits of campaign fundraising.
	1968		A return to American values; Anti- "left-wing theoreticians, 'briefcase toting' bureaucrats, ivory tower guideline writers, bearded anarchists, smart-aleck editorial writers, and pointy headed professors"
	1912		Tariff reduction, woman's suffrage, regulation of big business, end to child labor, and eight-hour work day, worker compensation and the popular election of senators.

1. If third parties have no realistic chance of winning an election, why do they bother running?

2. Review each of the 3<sup>rd</sup> parties from the 2000 Election. Identify one of their key issues they would want the Democrats or Republics to adopt.

*Reform Party-*

*Green Party-*

*Natural Law Party-*

*Constitutional party (Taxpayers Party)-*

3. T/F Because the Populist Party failed to win the Presidency in 1896, it was a failure as a political party. Defend your answer.

## Life in a Tenement Square: Student Matrix

Instructions: Using the provided reading and the two stations set up in the classroom, fill out the matrix below.

Problems of Tenement Life: Alcoholism, Overcrowding, Death Rates, Crime, Working Conditions, Sexism and Unsanitary Conditions

<b>Excerpt Number</b>	<b>Problem of Tenement Life you think it is describing.</b>	<b>Quote from the excerpt that best illustrates the problem.</b>	<b>Photograph number that you think best matches the excerpt.</b>	<b>Identify and explain the progressive reform that you think attempted to address this problem.</b>
<b>Excerpt #1</b>				
<b>Excerpt #2</b>				
<b>Excerpt #3</b>				



<b>Excerpt Number</b>	<b>Problem of Tenement Life you think it is describing.</b>	<b>Quote from the excerpt that best illustrates the problem.</b>	<b>Photograph number that you think best matches the excerpt.</b>	<b>Identify and explain the progressive reform that you think attempted to address this problem.</b>
<b>Excerpt #4</b>				
<b>Excerpt #5</b>				
<b>Excerpt #6</b>				
<b>Excerpt #7</b>				

**Progressive Era:**  
**Age of Reform 1900-1920**

- ☐ A time when both parties \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_ came to feel that certain economic & \_\_\_\_\_ wrongs in the U.S. had to be corrected & that the gov't should \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ Influenced by \_\_\_\_\_: ideas supported by "\_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_ middle class.

**Progressives wanted to fix:**

- abuses of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- exploitation of \_\_\_\_\_ labor
- \_\_\_\_\_
- corruption of city \_\_\_\_\_ "\_\_\_\_\_", & bosses

**Why did these problems exist?**

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**Progressive Achievements**

- Pure Food & Drug Acts, Meat Inspection Act
- \_\_\_\_\_
- Hepburn Act – reg. of \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- Federal Trade Commission
- Federal \_\_\_\_\_ Tax (\_\_\_\_\_)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Popular vote of \_\_\_\_\_ & direct \_\_\_\_\_
- Preservation of \_\_\_\_\_

*Matching: Match the Amendment with the provision it allowed.*

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| _____ 16 <sup>th</sup> Amendment: | a. Prohibition: prohibited manufacture, sale & transportation of alcohol |
| _____ 17 <sup>th</sup> Amendment: | b. Congress granted power to impose an Income Tax                        |
| _____ 18 <sup>th</sup> Amendment: | c. Suffrage: Women have the right to vote.                               |
| _____ 19 <sup>th</sup> Amendment: | d. Direct election of Senators   |

**How successful was the Progressive Era? (movement?)**

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Famous Progressives:

- Pres. R. Roosevelt
- 
- Jane Addams
- Florence \_\_\_\_\_
- 
- Eugene Debs

The Era ended when the U.S. entered into \_\_\_\_\_ & our focus changed. The \_\_\_\_\_ Amendment actually was passed after WWI in recognition of women's contribution to the war effort.

# Results of the Progressive Movement

## Weaknesses and Failures

1. The Progressive movement failed to achieve any basic realignment in the American party system. The 2 major parties continued on their merry way, and the Progressive party died soon after its defeat in 1912, most of the Progressives following Roosevelt back into the Republican ranks.
2. The Federal Reserve System did not solve the problem of the control of the nation's economy by the "money trust." When successive administrations friendly to business appointed bankers to the Federal Reserve Board, the system fell under the control of the very people it had been designed to curb.
3. The Clayton Act did not end abuses by trusts. By 1920, big Business was bigger than ever, for corporations found ways to evade the penalties and restrictions of the act.
4. Organized labor gained little or nothing, for the Clayton Act – originally hailed as "Labor's Magna Charta" – was interpreted by the conservative courts to the disadvantage of labor.
5. The agricultural problem was unsolved. Annual crop surpluses and large numbers of migratory farm workers remained on the scene.
6. There was no significant redistribution of the nation's wealth; the same fantastic differences between the various income levels persisted, and they were even increased by continuing profiteering- which reached scandalous proportions in World War I.

## Progressive Successes

1. The movement injected a healthy spirit of experimentation into the American political scene. It can at least be said that the Progressives discovered what would not work – a negative gain which was of some value for the future.
2. The Progressive movement contributed to the eventual abandonment of the traditional 19<sup>th</sup> century economic philosophy of laissez faire advocating in its place the concept of the socialized state – not a state with a socialist government, but a state which recognized its obligation to regulate the national economy in areas where imbalance existed, and to guaranteed the right of labor to organize and bargain collectively.
3. An important victory for the Progressives was the establishment of a program for conserving the nation's natural resources.
4. The machinery for railroad regulation set up during the era – if it was not altogether successful at the time – had important implications for the future.
5. Significant reform of the tax structure was achieved with the passage of the amendment legalizing federal taxation of personal incomes. The amendment gave the government a potential weapon for later use in social reconstruction.